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December 14, 2011

The Honorable Lamar Smith
Chairman
House Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Conyers
Ranking Member
House Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Members of Congress:

On behalf of the Center for Individual Freedom (CFIF) and over 250,000 supporters and activists across the nation, I write to reaffirm in the strongest possible terms our support of Congressional action to address the growing menace of rogue websites. More specifically, CFIF strongly supports the manager's amendment to the Stop Online Privacy Act (SOPA) that the Committee is scheduled to consider tomorrow, which allays concerns that some have raised and helps ensure passage of this critical legislation.

CFIF was established over a decade ago to advance the fundamental principles that made America the most prosperous and benevolent nation in human history – property rights, the rule of law and free markets. Our Founding Fathers considered intellectual property such a critical manifestation of those principles that they specifically protected it in Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution by empowering Congress, "To promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries." Today, in our increasingly knowledge-based global economy, intellectual property is more important than ever and constitutes the primary wellspring for future American growth, jobs, exports and life improvements.

Unfortunately, those same principles are under constant attack from rogue websites that wrongfully profit from pirated and counterfeited American intellectual property. Such violations not only deprive our citizens of the rightful fruits of their labor and investments, but ultimately jeopardize American security, jobs, trillions of dollars of income and even lives.

Opponents of rogue website legislation, however, have undertaken a campaign of misinformation, grossly mischaracterizing its intent, its actual provisions and its meticulous due process protections. Indeed, the arguments against rogue sites legislation have gone "rogue" themselves. SOPA applies existing property protections in the physical marketplace to that of the online space. No justifiable reason exists to differentiate Constitutional protections between the online and real-world markets, and SOPA is a commendable effort that would help shut off foreign counterfeiters and pirates that profit at Americans' expense. This effort is particularly critical during this period of protracted economic difficulty, high unemployment and international competition.

Accordingly, we at CFIF respectfully encourage the Committee and the entire Congress to address the threat of rogue websites and protect American intellectual property through rogue sites legislation. CFIF welcomes the changes offered by the manager's amendment to SOPA, and looks forward to working with the Judiciary Committee as it is marked up. Thank you very much for your attention to this extremely important matter.

Sincerely,

Timothy Lee
Vice President of Legal and Public Affairs

cc: Members of House Judiciary Committee